

D 622
.M44
Copy

Letter of the Bishops
of Belgium

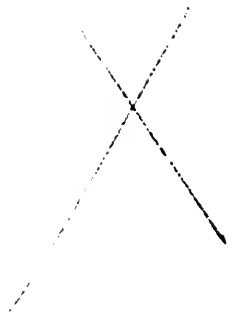
to the

Bishops of Germany
Bavaria and Austria-Hungary

THE NATION PRESS, Inc., 20 Vesey Street, New York

II 622
.M44

2 12



Letter of the Bishops
of Belgium

to the

Bishops of Germany
Bavaria and Austria-Hungary

Copyright, 1916, by
The New York Evening Post Co

FOREWORD

A Committee of French Catholics published "La Guerre Allemande et le Catholicisme." A German Committee published an answer: "Der Deutsche Krieg unter der Katholizismus. Deutsche Abwehr Französischer Angriffe."

A Committee of "German-American Catholics" saw fit to send an English translation of the German reply to all the Catholic clergymen of the United States, giving as their reason for so doing "the old juridical principle: Audiatur et altera pars." Whilst the answer of the German Catholics is presented as a reply to the French Catholics, the main parts of it are attacks against Belgium. For that reason it is only proper that the Belgian side also be heard.

The French Committee has several Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops among its members. The German Committee decided not to solicit the membership of German Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops because "purely political aims and polemics regarding Catholicism and the World War are irreconcilable with the dignity and tasks of the episcopal pastorate." The Belgian Bishops personally and under their own exclusive responsibility took up the defense of their country and gave their reasons for so doing. Whilst they emphatically deny the charges brought against Belgium they demand a fair and impartial investigation. In the letter of the Belgian Bishops you, as well as all who have read it, will admire their manly courage in denouncing injustice, their calm protestation of innocence and their logical and eloquent demand for a fair investigation and adequate reparation.

The Belgian Bishops, writing in Belgium, under German rule, were not in possession of all the documents published in Germany. Neither did they know all that happened in Germany. They ignored the sentiment which ran very high among German Catholics on account of the accusations against Belgian priests and religious. The latter were constantly accused in Germany of having excited the civil population and even of having led the snipers and set them the example. German Catholics decided to investigate these charges against the Belgian clergy. Among several others, one of their organizations, the "Pax-Informationen" of Munich, which is directed by German priests, made investigations with the assistance of the German military authorities. The result of these investigations appeared in several Catholic German papers, among others in the "Koelnische Volkszeitung" of Cologne, of September 20, October 2 and 28, November 10 and 27, December 31, 1914. These investigations show that the accusations against the Belgian clergy published by the German press and contained in a proclamation of the Kaiser posted in Belgium in September, 1914, as well as in the Kaiser's telegram to the President of the United States, were made without any foundation, according to formal declarations of German military authorities and German Doctors and were solemnly retracted under oath by the very soldiers who had pretended to have been witnesses of them and had taken part in bloody reprisals against Belgian priests. A German Jesuit, Father B. Duhr, one of the directors of the "Pax-Informationen," and whose name is of great authority in

Germany, shows in his book, printed by Manz at Munich, 1915, that these investigations concluded in favor of the Belgian clergy.

Catholic Belgium has always given abundant proof of its sincere devotion to the Holy Father, who in turn has never ceased to manifest his love for Belgium. At this very moment the Delegate Apostolic at Washington, Archbishop Bonzano, in the name of the Holy Father, addresses an appeal to the American Bishops in favor of those who have suffered most in the present war, especially the Belgians, the Poles and the Ruthenians. In this appeal a special homage is rendered to Belgium as follows:

"All these have deserved well of the Church in the past; for all have kept the faith in spite of many persecutions leveled against them. Belgium especially has rendered splendid service to the cause of religion both by its generosity towards all the good works carried on by the Church, such as the Propagation of the Faith, and also by its renowned educational Institutions, so useful even to the clergy of this country. For these reasons that little nation is particularly dear to the heart of the Vicar of Christ.

"You know how it would please the Holy Father to be able to assist them in this their hour of dire distress, and how grateful it would be to them to receive help from the Representative of Christ."

Rt. Rev. GUSTAVE DEPREITERE, V.G., Enid, Okla.

Rt. Rev. P. J. STOCKMAN, Hollywood, Cal.

Very Rev. J. B. BOGAERTS, New Orleans, La.

Very Rev. A. M. URBAN DE HASQUE, D.D., Oklahoma
City, Okla.

Very Rev. REMY LAFORT, D.D., Peekskill, N. Y.

Rev. J. J. BURRICK, Troy, N. Y.

Rev. M. JODOCY, Marquette, Mich.

Rev. Hy MUSSELY, New Bedford, Mass.

Rev. A. A. NOTEBAERT, Rochester, N. Y.

Rev. O. A. NYS, New York City, N. Y.

Rev. C. STEVENS, Ticonderoga, N. Y.

Rev. J. F. STILLEMANS, New York City, N. Y.

Rev. C. VAN DER DONCKT, Pocatello, Idaho.

Letters of the Bishop of Belgium to the Bishops of Germany, Bavaria and Austria-Hungary.

November the 24th, 1915.

To Their Eminences the Cardinals and Their Lordships the Bishops of Germany, Bavaria and Austria-Hungary :

As Catholic Bishops, you, the Bishops of Germany on the one hand and we, the Bishops of Belgium, France, and England on the other, have been giving for a year an unsettling example to the world.

Scarcely had the German armies trodden the soil of our country than the rumor was spread among you that our civil population was taking part in military operations; that the women of Visé and Liège were putting out your soldiers' eyes; that the populace in Antwerp and Brussels had sacked the property of expelled Germans.

FIRST GERMAN ACCUSATIONS.

In the first days of August (1914) Dom Ildefonds Herwegen, abbot of Maria Laach, sent to the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines a telegram in which he begged him, for the love of God, to protect German soldiers against the tortures which our countrymen were supposed to be inflicting on them.

Now it was notorious that our Government had taken useful measures so that every citizen might be instructed in the laws of war; in each commune, the arms of the inhabitants had to be deposited in the communal house; by posters, the population was warned that only citizens regularly enrolled under the flag were authorized to bear arms; and the clergy, anxious to aid the state in its mission, had spread, by word of mouth, by parish bulletins, by posters on church doors, the instructions given by its Government.

We were accustomed for a century to the rule of peace, and we had no idea that any one, in good faith, could attribute to us violent instincts. We were strong in our right and in the sincerity of our peaceful intentions; and we answered calumnies about "free shooters" and "eyes put out" with a shrug of the shoulders, since we were persuaded that the truth would be known, without delay, of itself.

The clergy and episcopate of Belgium had personal relations with numerous priests, members of religious communities, and bishops of Germany and Austria; the Eucharistic Congresses of 1909 at Cologne and 1912 at Vienna had given them the opportunity of nearer acquaintance and mutual appreciation. So we felt assured that Catholics of the nations at war with our own would not judge us lightly; and, without troubling himself much about the contents of Dom Ildefonds's telegram, the Cardinal of Malines limited his reply to an invitation to preach gentleness together with us—for, he added, "we are told that German troops are shooting innocent Belgian priests."

From the very first days of August crimes had been committed, at Battice, Visé, Berneau, Hervé, and elsewhere, but we were hoping that they would remain isolated deeds, and, knowing the very high relations

which Dom Ildefonds had, we put great confidence in the following declaration which he sent us on the 11th of August:

I am informed, at first hand, that formal orders have been given to German soldiers by the military authorities to spare the innocent. As to the very deplorable fact that even priests have lost their lives, I allow myself to bring to your Eminence's attention that, within these last days, the dress of priests and monks has become the object of suspicions and scandal, since French spies have used the ecclesiastical costume, and even that of religious communities, to disguise their hostile intentions.

Meanwhile, the acts of hostility toward innocent populations went on.

FIRST PROTESTATIONS OF THE BISHOPS OF LIEGE AND NAMUR.

On the 18th of August, 1914, the Bishop of Liège wrote to the Commanding Officer, Major Bayer, Governor of the city of Liège:

One after the other, several villages have been destroyed; notable persons, among whom were parish priests, have been shot; others have been arrested, and all have protested their innocence. I know the priests of my diocese; I cannot believe that a single one of them would have made himself guilty of acts of hostility toward the German soldiers. I have visited several ambulances, and I have seen German soldiers cared for in them with the same zeal as Belgians. This they themselves acknowledge.

[The entire text of the letter of the Bishop of Liège is appended hereto (Annex 1). His protest was renewed on the 21st of August to Gen. Kolewe, who had become Military Governor of Liège; and again, on the 29th of August, to His Excellency Baron von der Goltz, Governor-General of the occupied provinces of Belgium, who was lodging at that time in the Bishop's palace at Liège.]

This letter remained unanswered.

In the beginning of September, the Emperor of Germany covered with his authority the calumnious accusations of which our innocent populations were the object. He sent to Mr. Wilson, President of the United States, this telegram, which, so far as we know, has not hitherto been retracted:

The Belgian Government has publicly encouraged the civil population to take part in this war, which it had been preparing carefully for a long time. The cruelties committed during the course of this guerrilla war, by women and even by priests, on doctors and nurses have been such that my generals have finally been obliged to have recourse to the most rigorous methods to chastise the guilty and to prevent the sanguinary population continuing its abominable criminal and odious deeds. Several villages and even the city of Louvain have had to be demolished (excepting the very beautiful Hôtel-de-Ville) in the interest of our defence, and for the protection of my troops. My heart bleeds when I see that such measures have been made inevitable and when I think of the numberless innocent people who have lost home and goods as a consequence of those criminal deeds.

This telegram was posted up in Belgium, by order of the German Government, on the 11th of September. The very next day, 12th of September, the Bishop of Namur demanded to be received by the Military Governor of Namur, and protested against the reputation which his Majesty the Emperor sought to give to the Belgian clergy; he affirmed the innocence of all the members of the clergy who had been shot or maltreated, and declared that he was ready himself to publish any culpable deeds which might be proved.

The offer of the Bishop of Namur was not accepted, and no answer was made to his protest.

FALSEHOODS OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT.

Thus calumny was able to pursue its course freely. The German press encouraged it. The organ of the Catholic Centre rivalled the Lutheran press; and the day when thousands of our fellow countrymen, ecclesiastics and laymen, of Visé, Aerschot, Wessemael, Herent, Louvain, and numerous other places, all as innocent of acts of war or cruelty as you and we, were taken off as prisoners and passed through the railway stations of Aix-la-Chapelle and Cologne, and, for mortal hours, were given over as a show to the unwholesome curiosity of the Rhenish metropolis, they had the grief to know that their Catholic brethren vomited over them just as many insults as did the Lutherans of Celle, Soltau, or Magdeburg.

Not one voice was lifted up in Germany to take the defence of the victims.

The legend which was transforming innocent into guilty persons and crime into an act of justice thus became accredited, and on May 10, 1915, the "White Book"—an official organ of the German Empire—dared to adopt it on its own account, and to circulate in neutral countries these odious and cowardly falsehoods:

There is no doubt that German wounded have been stripped and put to death, yes, and frightfully mutilated by the Belgian population, and that even women and young girls have taken part in such abominations. Wounded soldiers have had their eyes put out, their ears, nose, fingers, and sexual organs cut off, or their bowels opened; in other cases, German soldiers have been poisoned, hanged to trees, have had boiling liquid poured over them, and been sometimes burned, so that they have endured death in atrocious pain. Such bestial proceedings of the population not only violate obligations expressly formulated by the Geneva Convention concerning the attention and care due to the wounded of an enemy army, but they are contrary to the fundamental principles of the laws of war and humanity.

Put yourselves for a moment in our place, dear brethren in the faith and priesthood.

We know that these shameless accusations of the Imperial Government are, from one end to the other, calumnies—we know it and we swear it.

Now, your Government, to justify these calumnies, invokes testimony that has not been verified by any contradictory examination whatever.

Is it not your duty, not only in charity, but in strict justice, to enlighten yourselves, to enlighten the faithful of your flocks, and to furnish us with the occasion to establish judicially our innocence?

You owed us this satisfaction in the name of Catholic charity which dominates national conflicts. You owe it to us—to-day—in strict justice, because a committee, covered by at least your tacit approbation, and composed of all that is most distinguished in politics and science and religion in Germany, has undertaken the patronage of the official accusations and confided to the pen of a Catholic priest, Prof. A. J. Rosenberg, of Paderborn, the task of condensing them in a book entitled, "The Lying Accusations of French Catholics against Germany," and has thus put on the back of Catholic Germany the responsibility of the active and public propagation of the calumny against the Belgian people.

When the French book, to which German Catholics oppose their own, saw the light, their Eminences Cardinal von Hartmann, archbishop of Cologne, and Cardinal von Bettinger, archbishop of Munich, felt it necessary to address to their Emperor a telegram in these words:

Revolting at the defamation of the German Fatherland and its glorious army contained in the book, "The German War and Catholicism," we have the heartfelt need of expressing our sorrowful indignation to your Majesty in the name of the whole German episcopate. We shall not fail to lift up our complaint even to the supreme head of the Church.

BELGIAN BISHOPS DEMAND AN INVESTIGATION.

Very well, Most Reverend Eminences, Venerated Colleagues of the German episcopate, in our turn, we archbishops and bishops of Belgium—*revolting at the calumnies against our Belgian country and its glorious army*, which are contained in the White Book of the Empire and reproduced in the German Catholics' answer to the work published by French Catholics—*we feel the need of expressing to our King, to our Government, to our army, to our country, our sorrowful indignation.*

And that our protest may not run counter to yours, without useful effect, we ask you to be willing to aid us to institute a tribunal of inquiry with evidence and counter-evidence. In the name of your officiality, you will appoint as many members as you desire, and as it pleases you to choose; we will appoint as many more, three for example, on each side. And we will ask together that the episcopate of a neutral state—Holland, Spain, Switzerland, or the United States—appoint for us a "superarbiter" who will preside at the operations of the tribunal.

You have taken your complaints to the Sovereign Head of the Church. It is not just that he should hear only your voice.

You will have the loyalty to aid us to make our voice heard also.

We have—you and we—an identical duty, to put before His Holiness tried documents on which he may be able to base his judgment.

THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT HAS ALWAYS REFUSED A SERIOUS INVESTIGATION.

You are not ignorant of the efforts we have made, one after another, to obtain from the Power which occupies Belgium the constitution of a tribunal of investigation.

The Cardinal of Malines, on two occasions, in writing—January 24, 1915, and February 10, 1915, and the Bishop of Namur, by a letter addressed to the Military Governor of his province, April 12, 1915, both solicited the formation of a tribunal to be composed of German and Belgian arbiters in equal number and to be presided over by a delegate from a neutral state.

Our efforts met with an obstinate refusal.

Yet the German authority was desirous to institute investigations. But it wished them to be one-sided—that is, without any judicial value.

After it had refused the investigation demanded by the Cardinal of Malines, the German authorities went into different localities where priests had been shot and peaceful citizens massacred or made prisoners, and there—on the depositions of a few witnesses taken haphazard or selected discreetly, sometimes in presence of a local authority who was

ignorant of the German language and thus found himself forced to accept and sign blindly the minutes made—it believed itself authorized to come to conclusions which were afterwards to be presented to the public as results of cross-examination.

The German investigation was carried out, in November, 1914, at Louvain, in such conditions. *It is therefore devoid of any authority.*

So it is natural that we should turn to you.

The Court of Arbitration, which the Power occupying our country has refused us, you will grant us—and you will obtain from your Government the public declaration that witnesses can be cited by you and by us to tell all they know, without having to dread reprisals. Before you, under cover of your moral authority, they will feel themselves more secure and be encouraged to bear witness to what they have seen and heard; the world will have faith in the episcopate of our two nations united; our common control will give authenticity to the witness borne and will guarantee the fidelity of the report. The investigation thus carried out will be believed.

THE BISHOPS SOLEMNLY AFFIRM THE INNOCENCE OF THE BELGIAN PEOPLE AND THE CRUELTY OF GERMANY.

We demand this investigation, Eminences and Venerated colleagues, before all else, *to avenge the honor of the Belgian people.* Calumnies put forth by your people and its highest representatives have violated it. And you know as well as we the adage of human, Christian, Catholic moral theology: “Without restitution, no pardon”—*Non remittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum.*

Your people, by the organ of its political powers and of its highest moral authorities, has accused our fellow-citizens of giving themselves up to atrocities and horrors on wounded German soldiers, and particulars are given, as above cited, by the White Book and the German Catholics’ manifesto. *To all such accusations we oppose a formal denial*—and we demand to give the proofs of the truth of our denial.

On the other hand, to justify the atrocities committed in Belgium by the German army, the political power, by the very title it gave its White Book—“Die Völkerrechtswidrige Führung des Belgischen Volkskriegs” (“The violation of the law of nations by the war proceedings of the Belgian people”)—and the hundred Catholics who signed the book—“The German War and Catholicism: German Answer to French Attacks”—assert that the German army found itself in Belgium in the case of legitimate defence against a treacherous organization of free-shooters.

We affirm that there was nowhere in Belgium any organization of free-shooters—and we demand, in the name of our National honor, which has been calumniated, the right to give proofs of the truth of our affirmation.

You will call whom you choose before the tribunal of cross-investigation. We shall invite to appear there all the priests of parishes where civilians, priests, members of religious communities, or laymen were massacred or threatened with death to the cry—*Man hat geschossen* (“Someone has been shooting”)—we shall ask all these priests to sign, if you wish it, their testimony under oath and then—*under penalty of pretending that the whole Belgian clergy is perjured, you will have to*

accept and the civilized world will not be able to refuse the conclusions of this solemn and decisive investigation.

But we add, Eminences and Venerated Colleagues, that you have the same interest as ourselves in this constitution of a tribunal of honor.

For, relying on our direct experience, we know—and *we affirm that the German army gave itself up in Belgium, in a hundred different places, to pillage and incendiarism, to imprisoning and massacres and sacrileges contrary to all justice and to all sentiment of humanity.*

This we affirm, in particular, for the communes whose names figure in our Pastoral letters, and in the two Notes addressed by the Bishops of Namur and Liège (respectively on the 31st of October and the 1st of November, 1915), to his Holiness Benedict XV, to his Excellency the Nuncio of Brussels, and to the Ministers or representatives of neutral countries at Brussels.

Fifty innocent priests, thousands of innocent faithful, were put to death; hundreds of others, whose lives have been preserved by circumstances independent of their persecutors' will, were put in danger of death; thousands of innocent people were made prisoners without trial, many of them underwent months of detention, and, when they were released, the most minute questionings to which they had been subjected had brought out against them no evidence of guilt.

These crimes cry to heaven for vengeance.

If, when we formulate these denunciations, we calumniate the German army; or if the military authority had just reasons to order or permit these acts, which we call criminal, it belongs to the honor and to the national interest of Germany to confound us. Just so long as German justice tries to escape, we keep the right and the duty to denounce what, in conscience, we consider a grave violation of justice and of our honor.

NONE MAY VIOLATE JUSTICE.

The Chancellor of the German Empire, in the Reichstag session of the 4th of August, declared that the invasion of Luxemburg and Belgium was "in contradiction with the prescriptions of the right of nations"; he recognized that, "by passing over the justified protests of the Governments of Luxemburg and Belgium, he was committing *an injustice* which he promised to repair"; and the Sovereign Pontiff, intentionally alluding to Belgium—as he deigned to cause his Eminence Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State, to write to M. Van den Heuvel, Belgian Minister—pronounced in his Consistorial Allocution of January 22, 1915, this irreformable judgment: "It belongs to the Roman Pontiff, whom God has established as a supreme interpreter and avenger of the eternal law, to proclaim, before all else, that *none may, for any reason whatsoever, violate justice.*"

Yet, since that time, politicians and casuists seek to dodge or enfeeble those decisive words. In their reply to French Catholics, German Catholics engage themselves in like mean subtleties and would feign corroborate them by a fact. They have at their disposition two witnesses: one—who is anonymous—saw, so he says, on the 26th of July, French officers in conversation with Belgian officers in the Boulevard Anspach at Brussels; the other, a certain Gustave Lochar, of Rimogue, deposes that "two regiments of French dragoons, the Twenty-eighth and the Thirtieth, and

one battery crossed the Belgian frontier on the 31st of July, 1914, and remained exclusively on Belgian territory during all the following week."

Now, the Belgian Government affirms that, "before the declaration of war, no French troop, no matter how small, had entered Belgium." And it adds: "There is no honest witness who can rise up against this affirmation."

The Government of our King, therefore, accuses German Catholics of asserting an error.

Here is a question of prime importance, both political and moral, on which we ought to enlighten the public conscience.

If, however, you should refuse to examine this general question, we ask you at least to check off the witness on which German Catholics have relied to decide the question against us. The deposition of this Gustave Lochard touches facts easy to verify. German Catholics will wish to free themselves from the reproach of error and will make it a duty of conscience to retract the error if they have let themselves be deceived to our injury.

NO ESCAPE IS POSSIBLE.

We are not ignorant that you have a repugnance to believe that regiments of whom, you say, you know the discipline, the honor, the religious faith, could have given themselves up to the inhuman acts with which we reproach them. *You wish to persuade yourselves that it is not so, because it cannot be so.*

And, forced by evidence, we answer you—*it can be so, because it is so.*

In face of the fact, no presumption holds.

For you, as for us, there is but one issue—the verification of the fact by a commission whose impartiality is and appears to all to be beyond dispute.

We have no difficulty in understanding your state of mind.

We, too, respect, believe us, the spirit of discipline and labor and faith of which we have so often had proofs and gathered testimony among your fellow countrymen. Very numerous are those Belgians now who bitterly confess their deception. But they have lived through the sinister events of August and September. The truth has triumphed over all interior resistance. *The fact can no longer be denied—Belgium has been made a martyr.*

When foreigners of neutral countries—Americans, Hollanders, Swiss, Spanish—ask us of the way in which the German war has been carried on, and wish us to narrate certain scenes whose horror, in spite of ourselves, we have verified, we soften the impression, feeling how far the naked truth passes limits of probability.

Nevertheless, when you have been placed in the presence of the entire reality, when you have been able to analyze the causes, some distant, others immediate, of what one of your generals—before the ruins of the little village of Schaffenlez-Diest, and before the martyred parish priest—called "a tragic error"; when you hear the influences which your soldiers underwent at the moment of their entry into Belgium and in the intoxication of their first successes, the unlikelihood of the truth will appear to you, as to us, less disconcerting.

WE ARE IMPRISONED AND REDUCED TO SILENCE.

Most of all, Eminences and Venerated Colleagues, let not yourselves be held back by the vain pretext that an investigation would be now premature.

We might say so, indeed, because at the present hour the investigation would have to be made in circumstances unfavorable to ourselves. Our populations, in fact, have been so profoundly terrorized, and the prospect of reprisals is still so sombre for them, that the witnesses we may call before a tribunal which would be German in part would scarcely dare to tell the truth to the end.

But decisive reasons are opposed to all dilatory procedure.

The first, that which will go straight to your hearts, is the fact that we are the weak and you the powerful. You would not wish to abuse of your strength against us.

Public opinion usually goes to him who first possesses himself of it.

Now, whereas you have all liberty to flood neutral countries with your publications, we are imprisoned and reduced to silence. *Hardly are we permitted to lift up our voices inside our churches; the preaching in them is under control, that is, parodied by paid spies*; protestations of conscience are qualified as revolts against public authorities; what we write is stopped at the frontier as contraband. So you alone enjoy freedom of speech, and of the pen, and if you will, in a spirit of charity and equity, procure a particle of it for Belgians who are accused and give them a chance to defend themselves, it is for you to come to their protection as soon as possible. The old law adage—*Audiat et altera pars* ("Let the other side be heard")—is posted up, they tell us, at the doors of many German courts of law. In any case, for you as for us, it is law for the judgments of episcopal officialities, and doubtless, too, with you as with us, it circulates in the people's speech under this figure—"Who hears but one bell hears but one sound."

You will say, perhaps: "That is the past; forget it. Instead of casting oil on the fire, try rather to pardon and join your efforts with those of the Power occupying your territory—for it only asks to heal the wounds of the unhappy Belgian people."

CAN BELGIUM BE ASKED TO RESIGN HERSELF AND FORGET?

Oh, Eminences and dear colleagues, add not irony to injustice.

Have not we suffered enough? Have we not been—are we not still—tortured cruelly enough?

It is the past; resign yourselves—forget.

The past! But all the wounds are still bleeding! There is not an honest heart that is not swollen with indignation. While we hear our own Government saying to the face of the world, "That one is twice guilty who, after violating another's rights, tries still, audaciously and cynically, to justify himself by imputing to his victim faults which he had never committed," our own people can only by doing violence to themselves stifle words of malediction. But yesterday a peasant in the neighborhood of Malines learned that his son had fallen on the field of battle. A priest consoled him. And the brave man answered: "Oh, for this one, I gave him to our country. But they took my eldest son, the cowards, and shot him down in a ditch!"

How do you wish us to obtain from such unfortunates, who have been made to know every torture, a sincere word of resignation and forgiveness, so long as those who have made them suffer refuse them one word of acknowledgment or repentance or promise of reparation?

Germany will not give us back the blood she has made to flow and the innocent lives her armies have mowed down—but it is in her power to make restitution to the Belgian people of their honor, which she has violated or let be violated.

This restitution we demand from you—from you who are the first and chief representatives of Christian morals in the church of Germany.

There is something more profoundly sad than political divisions and material disaster—it is the hatred which injustice, real or presumed, heaps up in so many hearts made to love each other. As pastors of our peoples, does it not belong to us, is there not incumbent on us, the mission to make easy the dying away of evil feeling and to re-establish on the foundation so shaken now of justice, a union in charity of all children of the great Catholic family?

The Power that occupies our territory says and writes, indeed, its intention of healing our wounds.

But those who judge from man's exterior must judge the intention by the action.

GERMANY IS STILL CONSTANTLY VIOLATING INTERNATIONAL LAW IN BELGIUM.

Now, all that we know—we poor Belgians who are undergoing for the passing time the Empire's domination—is that the power which engaged its honor to govern us according to international law as codified in the Hague Convention is not keeping faith with its engagement.

We do not speak of individual abuses against citizens in particular, or against communes, abuses whose character can be established only by investigation from both sides after the war; we speak, here and now, only of acts of Government as they are made known by official documents emanating from Government and posted up on the walls of our cities and, consequently, engaging beyond all possible discussion the responsibility of Government.

Now, the violations of the Hague Convention, ever since the date when our provinces were occupied, are numerous and flagrant. We classify them here under a few heads, and give in an appendix the proofs of our allegations. The following are the chief heads of violation:

Collective punishments decreed on account of individual deeds, contrary to article 50 of the Hague Convention.

Forced labor for the enemy, contrary to article 52.

New taxes, in violation of articles 48, 49, and 52.

Abuses of requisitions in kind, violating article 52.

Ignoring of laws in force in Belgium, contrary to article 43.

These violations of international law, aggravating our unhappy lot and accumulating in hearts habitually peaceful and charitable the seeds of revolt and hatred, *would not be carried on did not those who commit them feel themselves supported, if not by the positive approbation, at least by the complaisant silence of all those who form opinion in their own country.*

Confidently, then, we take up our appeal to your charity; we are the weak, you are the strong; come and judge if it is still allowable for you not to aid us.

WHAT RELIGIOUS INTERESTS DEMAND.

There are, moreover, for the constitution of a Commission of Investigation by members of the Catholic episcopate, reasons of a general order.

We have already insisted on the unsettling spectacle which our divisions are giving to the world—it is an occasion of scandal and awakens thoughts of blasphemy.

Our populations do not understand how you can be ignorant of the double flagrant iniquity which has swooped down on Belgium—the violation of our neutrality and the inhuman conduct of your soldiers—and why, knowing it, you do not lift up your voices to condemn and to clear yourselves of siding with it.

On the other hand, what ought to scandalize your own populations, Protestant and Catholic, is the rôle attributed by your press to the Belgian clergy and to a nation over which, for thirty years, a notoriously Catholic government has been presiding. "Beware," said the Bishop of Hildesheim to his clergy on the 21st of September, 1914, "these charges which the press is circulating against priests and monks and members of religious communities of Catholic nations are digging a pit between Catholics and Protestants on German soil and the religious future of the Empire is put at stake." The campaign of calumnies against our clergy and our people has not slackened. Deputy of the Centre Erzberger seems to have taken for his part to foment it. Even in Belgium, in the Antwerp Cathedral on the 16th Sunday after Pentecost, one of your priests, Heinrich Mohr, dared to say from the chair of truth to the Catholic soldiers of your army: "Official documents have informed us how Belgians have hanged German soldiers to trees, have poured boiling liquids over them, have burned them alive."

There is but one way to put a stop to these scandals, which is the bringing to the light of day the full truth, and the public condemnation, by the religious authority, of the truly guilty ones.

For honest men, believers or unbelievers, another subject of scandal is the craze to put forward a calculation of the advantages and disadvantages which Catholic interests would have from the success either of the Triple Alliance or the Quadruple Entente. Professor Schrors, of the University of Bonn, was the first, so far as we know, to give up his leisure to such vexatious calculation. (*Der Krieg und der Katholismus*, von Dr. Heinrich Schrors, prof. d. Katholischen Theologie an der Universität in Bonn.)

The religious results of the war are God's secret, and no one of us is in the Divine confidence.

But there is a question which dominates all that—a question of morals, of right, and of honor.

"Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Do your duty, no matter what may be the result.

THE SUPREME DUTY OF BISHOPS.

Therefore, we bishops, at the present hour, have a moral and, consequently, a religious duty which takes precedence of all others—to seek and to proclaim the truth.

Christ, of whom it is our great honor to be at once the disciples and the ministers, has said—has He not?—that His social mission is to bear witness to the truth: “*For this was I born, for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth.*”

In the solemn days of our consecration as bishops, we promised God and the Catholic Church never to be deserters of the truth, not to give it up for ambition or fear when there should be question of proving that we love the truth.

We, therefore, by our vocation, have an office and a ground of understanding in common. Confusion reigns in minds; what one calls light another calls darkness; what is good to some is evil to others. The tribunal for the investigation of both sides, to which we have the honor of inviting your delegates, will help, such is the hope we nourish, to dissipate more than one doubt.

With all the ardor of his will, our Holy Father the Pope makes an appeal for peace; in the letter which he vouchsafed to address you at your last meeting in Fulda, he urged all of you to desire peace as he does. But he wishes it only when based on the respect of right and the dignity of peoples—*quæ justitiæ sit opus et populorum congruat dignitati.*

Therefore, it will be in answer to the will of our common father that we should work together to make to shine and to triumph the truth, on which must rest justice and the honor of nations, and, finally, peace.

Receive, Eminences and Venerated Colleagues, the expression of our respectful and fraternal devotion.

(Signed) D. J. CARDINAL MERCIER, Archbishop of Malines.
ANTHONY, Bishop of Ghent.
GUSTAVE, J., Bishop of Bruges.
THOMAS LOUIS, Bishop of Namur.
MARTIN HUBERT, Bishop of Liège.
AMEDEE CROOY, appointed Bishop of Tournai.

ANNEX I.

LETTER ADDRESSED BY HIS LORDSHIP THE BISHOP OF LIEGE TO COMMANDING OFFICER BAYER, GOVERNOR OF LIEGE, ON AUGUST 18, 1914:

DEAR SIR:

I appeal to you as a man and as a Christian to put a stop to executions and reprisals. I am told repeatedly that several villages have been destroyed, that prominent people, among whom parish priests, have been shot and others arrested and all of whom have protested their innocence. Priests like those of my diocese, I cannot believe would be guilty of a single act of hostility toward the German soldiers. I visited many ambulances and I saw that the wounded Germans were treated with the same care as the Belgians. They themselves recognized this fact. If the soldiers of the Belgian army, stationed at the outposts, fired upon the Germans as they entered Belgium, can this be imputed as a crime to the civil population? And even if some civilians helped the soldiers to repulse the German scouts, is the entire population, the women, the children and the priests to be held responsible? But I do not wish to discuss that which has passed, I ask you only, in the name of humanity and in God's name, to prevent the reprisals on inoffensive inhabitants. These reprisals can have no beneficial results, but will only drive the people to desperation.

I would be glad to discuss this matter with you, as I feel confident that you, like myself, wish to allay the evils of the war instead of aggravating them.

At the last moment I learn that the Curé of R..... has been arrested and taken to Chartreuse. I do not know of what he is accused, but I know that he is incapable of committing an act of hostility toward your soldiers; he is a good priest, gentle and charitable. I hold myself responsible for him and I beseech you to have him returned to his parish.

Please accept, etc.,

(Signed) M. H. RUTTEN, Bishop of Liège.

This letter remained unanswered, but the same protestations were renewed the 21st of August to General Kolowe, who had since been made Military Governor of Liège.

The same protestations, vigorously expounded and strongly emphasized, were renewed in an interview with the Governor-General of occupied Belgium, Mr. Von der Goltz-Pacha, then quartered at the episcopal palace with his staff officers, August 29.

ANNEX II.

This annex contains:

1st. A letter from His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Mechlin, to the Kreischef of Division of Mechlin, dated January 24, 1915.

2nd. A communication from His Eminence the Cardinal of Mechlin, transmitted to the General Government through the intermediary of Adjutant von Flemming, dated February 10, 1915.

3rd. A letter from His Lordship the Bishop of Namur to the Military Governor of Namur, dated April 12, 1915.

4th. A note relative to a partial investigation made by an Austrian priest, deputy of the "Wiener Priester Verein."

5th. The correspondence of the Cardinal of Mechlin with His Excellency the German Governor General regarding abuses suffered by nuns.

6th. In his Pastoral Letter of Christmas, 1914, the Cardinal of Mechlin published the names of the innocent priests who were put to death by the German troops.

The Count of Wengersky, Kreischef of Division of Mechlin, wrote the following letter to the Cardinal on January 20th :

Chief of the District of Mechlin, January 20, 1915. Tgb. No. 268/11.

To His Eminence the Cardinal-Archbishop of Mechlin:

According to the press, many innocent priests in the diocese of Mechlin were put to death. In order to institute an investigation, I beg Your Eminence to let me know if innocent priests of the diocese of Mechlin were killed, and who they were.

I would like very much to know also under what conditions they were put to death, and by what troops and on what dates.

Chief of District,

(S.) WENGERSKY, Colonel.

The Cardinal answered the Count von Wengersky as follows :

Archbishopric of Mechlin, January 24, 1915.

DEAR SIR :

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter 268/11, dated January 20th, which you were kind enough to send me.

The names of the priests and the religious of the diocese of Mechlin who, to my knowledge, were put to death by the German troops are as follows : Dupierreux of the Society of Jesus ; Brother Sebastian Allard, of the Congregation of the Josephites ; Brother Candide, of the Congregation of the Brothers of N. D. de Miséricorde ; Father Vincent of the Conventuals ; Carette, professor ; Lombaerts, Goris, De Clerck, Dergent, Wouters, Van Wouters, Van Bladel, rectors.

On Christmas I still did not know for a certainty what the lot of the rector of Hérent was. Since then his body has been found at Louvain and identified. Other figures cited in my Pastoral must to-day be increased : for instance for Aerschot I gave the number of victims as 91, while the number of bodies of the inhabitants of Aerschot exhumed, reached a few days ago the total of 143. But the moment has not come to dwell upon these particular cases. They will find place in the inquiry which you have given me reason to expect.

It will be a consolation for me to see full light thrown on the events which I had to record in my Pastoral Letter and on others of the same nature.

But it is essential that the results of this inquiry appear to all as being unquestionably authentic.

To this end, I have the honor to propose to you, Monsieur le Comte, and to propose by your kind intervention, to the German Authorities, that the Commission on Inquiry be composed of an equal number of German delegates and Belgian magistrates to be named by our Magistracy, and to be presided over by a representative of a neutral country. I believe that His Excellency the Minister from the United States will not refuse to accept this presidency or to confide it to a delegate of his choice.

Accept, I beg of you, Monsieur le Kreischef, the assurance of my high consideration.

(S.) D. J. Card. Mercier, Arch. of Mechlin.

To the Count von Wengersky, Kreischef, Mechlin.

This request remained unanswered.

2. On February 10th, Adjutant von Flemming presented himself, in the name of the Kreischef, to the Archbishopric of Mechlin, regarding the renewing of the questionnaire to which the latter already answered in his letter of January 24th. The Cardinal pointed out to the Adjutant that questions of this nature should be formulated and answered in writing. Consequently he worded, in the following terms, the requests of the Kreischef and the answers they required, and the document was signed afterwards by the Adjutant and by the Cardinal of Mechlin.

ARCHBISHOPRIC OF MECHLIN,

Adjutant von Flemming asks me in the name of the General Government :

1. In which communes were priests shot ?

2. What troops put them to death and on what day?
3. Does the Bishop of the diocese contend that these priests were innocent?

1. The names of these communes have already been published in my pastoral letter of Christmas, 1914, on page 65.

2. The German staff is in a position to know better than anybody else which troops occupied such and such a commune on such and such a date. The inhabitants readily recognize the German uniform, but cannot for the most part discern of which regiments the army is composed.

3. My personal and substantiated conviction is that the priests whose names I cited were innocent; but in justice it is not for us to prove their innocence; it is the military authorities who treated them with such severity who should establish their guilt.

The witnesses called to give testimony in the presence of a unilateral commission, will for the most part, be afraid to tell the whole truth. The truth will not be fully known and will not universally force acceptance unless on condition that a mixed commission be formed to receive it and to guarantee its impartiality and its integrity.

So I can only renew for the third time (1) my proposition to confide to a mixed commission, composed partly of Belgian magistrates, the task of throwing light on these facts regarding which the General Government has the happy inspiration to institute an inquiry. In order to give the desired authority to the results of the inquiry, it is necessary that the Court of Inquiry be presided over by a delegate of a neutral country.

Made at Mechlin, the 10th of February, 1915.

(S.) D. J. CARD. MERCIER, ARCH. OF MECHLIN.

(S.) VON FLEMMING, Ritmeister and Adjutant of the Krieschefs of Mechlin.

* (1) The proposition was formulated a first time, in writing, Jan. 24th, and taken up again orally February 8th, by Mgr. Van Roey Vicar General, who was ordered to come to the Kommandantur of Mechlin.

This request remained unanswered.

3. On the occasion of the publication of a confidential letter from the Cabinet of the Minister of War of Prussia to the Grand Chancellor, His Lordship the Bishop of Namur published, the 12th of April, 1915, an answer to this document.

While the Military Governor of Namur contested—without specifying anything, however—the affirmations contained in the answer of the bishop, the latter maintained his affirmations and added: "On account of the difference of opinion which separates us, there remains only one way to make clear to everybody the facts in the case. That is to confide the investigation to a commission of inquiry which I proposed. I am confident that Your Excellency will join forces with me and will recommend the project to the Governor-General.

(S) T. L., Bishop of Namur."

The proposition of His Lordship the Bishop of Namur remained unanswered.

4. A priest accredited by H. E. Cardinal Piffi, Archbishop-Prince of Vienna, made an inquiry in Belgium in the name of "Wiener Priester Verein."

The results of this partial inquiry were published in the "Tijd" of Amsterdam and in the "Politiken" of Copenhagen. They proved a crushing blow to the German military authorities. But if we are rightly informed, the German and Austrian newspapers omitted to bring this to the knowledge of their readers.

5. Before bringing this annex relative to the inquiries to a close, we have to make a correction:

In their answer to the French Catholics, the German Catholics speak of attacks on nuns, and write: "The German Governor-General in Belgium addressed himself on this subject to the Belgian Bishops. . . . The Archbishop of Mechlin made known that he could furnish no exact information on any case of violation of a nun in his diocese."

This last sentence is materially correct, but would lead into error the inattentive reader. I wrote, in fact, to the Governor-General that I could not furnish any exact information, because my conscience forbade me to give to no matter what court the information, alas, very exact, which I possess. Attacks on nuns were made. Happily, I believe, not a great many, but there were several to my knowledge.

Since the Governor-General deemed proper to give to the public an extract of the letter which I had the honor to address to him on this delicate subject, it is my duty to reproduce here the entire text of our correspondence.

Here is the translation of the letter which the Governor-General wrote to me on March 30th, 1915:

The Governor General, in Belgium.

Brussels, March 30, 1915.

EMINENCE :

The foreign press, in addition to a series of other accusations, the greater part of which have already been proven false, launched this grave accusation that the German soldiers during their march through Belgium did not shrink from attacks on Belgian nuns.

It is not necessary to point out that such facts, had they been recognized as true, would have been severely condemned by the General Government and the German Government. On the other hand, justice exacts that accusations recognized as inexact should be spurned as they deserve.

I dare hope that the discovery of the real truth responds as well to the sentiments of the Catholic Church as to the interests of Justice, and I believe I can depend on the support of Y. E. when I beg you to assist me in my efforts to elucidate these facts.

The documents that Y. E. may communicate concerning alleged attacks on nuns will put me in a position to take such steps that the situation demands.

Begging you to accept the expression of my highest consideration, I have the honor to be Your Eminence's very respectful,

(S.) BARON VON BISSING,

To H. E. the Archbishop of Mechlin, at Mechlin.

Here is our answer :

ARCHBISHOPRIC OF MECHLIN

Monsieur the Governor General,

I received letter No. 1243 which your Excellency did me the honor to write to me, and I regret having been prevented answering sooner.

Rumors are circulated in fact which are accepted by certain newspapers, and denied by others, regarding outrages which Belgian nuns suffered at the hands of German soldiers, and in accordance with Your Excellency, I protest against those who lightly, without proof, cast before the public or entertain such odious accusations.

But when Your Excellency asks me to help to throw light on the truth or untruth of these imputations, I find myself compelled to oppose a preliminary question.

Have the civil authorities the right to institute an inquiry regarding matters of so delicate a nature?

Whom will they question?

The Confessor? The Physician? They are bound by professional secrecy.

The Superiors? Do they always know the truth?

And if they know it as a result of being told under the seal of a secret, have they the right to speak?

Will they dare to question those interested? Would it not be cruel? Will they try to make witnesses speak, at the risk of exposing these victims of violence, already so unfortunate, to bear before the public the stain of their dishonor?

For myself, I would not dare to submit anybody to an examination on so delicate a subject, and the disclosures which have been made to me spontaneously, or which will be made to me, in this regard, my conscience forbids me to make known to any one.

Our duty, Excellency, is to prevent, by the means in our power that the public gratifies itself with these capricious and unhealthful allegations, and I will commend with all my heart the repression which justice will exercise on those, who, on account of prejudice or unpardonable thoughtlessness, invent or spread them. But I believe that we cannot go any further without encroaching on the rights of conscience and exposing ourselves to violate the liberty of private conscience.

Accept, Monsieur le Gouverneur-General, the renewed assurance of my very high consideration.

(S.) D. J. CARD. MERCIER, Archbishop of Mechlin.

To His Excellency, Monsieur le Baron, von Bissing, Governor General, Brussels.

ANNEX III

We know and we affirm that the German army gave itself up in Belgium in a hundred different quarters, to pillage, to incendiarism, and imprisonments, and to massacres, and sacrileges, contrary to all justice and all human sentiment.

1. DIOCESE OF NAMUR: PROVINCES OF NAMUR AND OF LUXEMBURG:

Tamines, Surice, Spontin, Namur, Ethe Gomery, Latour, Aische-en-Refail, Alle, Arsimont, Auvelais, Bounine, Bourseigne-Neuve, Bouge, Daussois, Dourbes, Ermeton-sur-Biert, Evrehailles, Felenne, Fosses, Franchimont, Franc Waret, Frasne, Gedinne, Gelbressée, Hansinelle, Hanzinne, Hautbois, Hastiere, Hermeton-sur-Meuse, Hingeon, Houdremont, Jemeppe-sur-Sambre, Lisogne, Louette St-Pierre, Mariembourg, Mettet, Monceau, Morville, Onhay, Oret, Petigny, Romedenne, Somme-Leuze, Somzée, Stave, Temploux, Villers-en-Fagne, Wartet, Waulsort, Willerzie, Yvoir, Anloy, Assenois, Glaumont, Baranzy, Betrix, Briscol, Etalle, Framont, Frênes-Opont, Freylange, Glaireuse, Hamipré, Herbeumont, Izel, Jéhouville, Maissin, Manhay, Musson, Mussy-la-Ville, Neufchâteau, Pin, St. Léger, etc., etc.

Thibessart, Biesme, Porcheresse, Graide, Nothomb, Rulles, Rosière-la-Grande, Bovigny, Gouvy, Champion, Jamoigne, Silenrieux, Les Bulles, Tintigny, Ansart, Rossignol, Sorinne, Bièvre, Behème, Légglise, Lanefte, Frénois, Villers-devant-Orval, Couvin, Houdemont, Chiny, Anthée, Ychippe, Conneux Aye, Evelette, Florenville, Hollogne, Le Roux, Leuze, Marche, St. Marie, Ste-Vincent.

Andenne Dinant.

2. DIOCESE OF LIEGE: PROVINCES OF LIEGE AND OF LIMBURG:

Battice, Herve, Visé, Mouland, Hermée, Allambray, Louvignée, Lincé, Poulart, Sommague, Pécher, Melin, Julimont, Barchon, Lummen, Heulen, Geselee, Lanaeken.

3. DIOCESE OF MECHLIN: PROVINCES OF BRABANT AND OF ANTWERP.

Haakendover, Autgaerden, Grimde, Hougærde, Cumptich, Hauthem, Ste. Marguerite, Vissenaeken, Bunsbeek, Lubbeek, St. Bernard, Wever, Attenrode, Cappellen (Glabbeek), Cortryck-Dutsel, Glabbeek, Pellenberg, Neerlinter, Budingen, Heelenbosch, Orsmael-Gussenhoven, Corbeck-100, Lovenjoul, Roosbeek, Schaffen, Molelnstede, Wersbeek, Aerschot, Rillaer, Gelrode, Wesemael, Hersselt, Rethy, Haecht, Rotselaer, Wackerzeel, Werchter, Tremeloo, Thildonck, Wespelaer, Boortmeerbeek, Rymenam, Hever, Louvain, Heverlé, Hérent, Berg, Campenhout, Bueken, Nederockerzeel, Cortenberg, Delle, Boisschot, Goor, Heyst-op-den-Berg, Beersel, Putte, Schriek, Malines, Bonheyden, Wavre-Notre-Dame, Wavre Ste. Catherine, Wael-

hem, Leest, Hombek, Sempst, Laer, Hofstade, Muysen, Schiplaeken, Koningshoyckt, Kessel, Lierre, Duffel, Blaesvelt, Perck, Peuthy, Hauthem, Elewijt, Weerde, Epegghem, Pont-Brûlé, Grimbergen, Londerzeel, Meye, Humbeek, Nieuwenrode, Beyghem, Wolverthem, Cappelle-au-Bois, Linsmeau, Wavre, Mousty.

4. DIOCESE OF GHENT: EAST FLANDERS:

Saint-Gilles, Lebbeke, Termonde.

5. DIOCESE OF TOURNAI: PROVINCE OF HAINAUT:

Péronne.

ANNEX IV.

VIOLATION OF THE CONVENTION OF THE HAGUE.

Germany signed the Convention of The Hague.

Already the first German Governor General, M. le Baron von der Goltz, invoked the Convention of The Hague in a decree published by him November 12, 1914.

The second German Governor General, Baron von Bissing, in a solemn proclamation published July 18th, 1915, declared himself "DESIROUS OF GOVERNING BELGIUM ACCORDING TO THE CONVENTION OF THE HAGUE, CONCERNING THE LAWS AND THE CUSTOMS OF THE WAR ON LAND. . . ." He added: "HIS MAJESTY THE GERMAN EMPEROR, after the occupation of the Kingdom of Belgium by our victorious troops confided to me the administration of the country, and CHARGED ME TO FULFIL THE OBLIGATIONS RESULTING FROM THE CONVENTION OF THE HAGUE."

This is the law.

Here are the facts:

1. THE COLLECTIVE PENALTIES.

Article 50 of the Convention stipulates: "No collective penalty, pecuniary or other, can be pronounced against the inhabitants, on account of individual facts, of which they cannot be considered as jointly responsible."

Now, the history of the occupation comprises three periods: that of the invasion, those over which presided successively, Baron von der Goltz and Baron von Bissing.

DURING THE PERIOD OF INVASION, the collective penalty was applied systematically and under all forms. Proofs of this assertion abound. Here is one in itself sufficient:

Accordingly as the invasion gained ground the Commander in Chief of the army had posted up in three languages, on red paper, a proclamation which read:

Villages where acts of hostility will be committed by the inhabitants against our troops, WILL BE BURNED.

WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE for all destruction of routes, railroads, bridges, etc. . . . THE VILLAGES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD of the points of destruction.

The penalties mentioned above will be executed with severity and without mercy. THE ENTIRE POPULATION WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE. Hostages will be taken in numbers. The heaviest war tax will be imposed.

UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF MARECHAL VON DER GOLTZ, a proclamation signed by the hand of the Governor General,

and promulgated the 2nd of September, 1914, in the occupied territory, said expressly: "It is the hard necessity of war that the penalties for hostile acts affect, BESIDES THE GUILTY ONES, also THE INNOCENT."

Consequently, the collective penalties were applied without restriction.

Thus, a typical example, the City of Brussels was condemned to pay 5 millions as fine, because one of its policemen, unknown to the Communal administration, omitted to pay deference to an official of the German civil government.

A notice signed Baron von der Goltz, posted up the 7th of October, 1914, applies the collective penalty to the family. It says: "The Belgian Government sent to militiamen of different classes, orders to rejoin the army. . . . All who receive these orders are strictly forbidden to obey them. . . . IN CASE OF INFRINGEMENT THE FAMILY OF THE MILITIAMAN WILL BE HELD EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE." UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF GENERAL VON BISSING, that is to say, from the third of December, 1914, the collective PUNISHMENTS, in violation of Article 50, were continuous. Here are some samples :

The 23rd of September, 1914, a notice posted up in Brussels read: "If the graves of fallen soldiers are damaged or violated, not only will the one who committed the deed be punished, but THE TOWN WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE."

A notice from the Governor General, dated January 26, 1915, makes the MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY RESPONSIBLE for the fact that a Belgian, eligible for military service, of from 16 to 40 years of age, passes into Holland.

And in fact under the most trifling pretext, heavy fines are imposed on the townships: the township of Puers has to pay a fine of three thousand marks because the telegraph wire was broken, although it was established after inquiry that usage had caused it to break.

Mechlin, an industrial city, without resources, sees itself obliged to pay a fine of twenty thousand marks because the Burgomaster did not inform the military authorities of a trip that the Cardinal, who had been deprived of his automobile, was obliged to make on foot.

2. FORCED LABOR FOR THE ENEMY.

According to article 52 of the Convention, requisitions in kind and services cannot be demanded from the communes or from the inhabitants except on three conditions :

On condition that they do not comprise for the inhabitants the obligation to take part in operations of war against their country.

On condition that they only concern the needs of the occupying army.

On condition that they are in accordance with the resources of those of whom they are asked.

It is interesting to note that Article 23 contains a closing item which was proposed to the second Congress of The Hague in 1907 by the German delegation; here it is: It is forbidden for a belligerent to force

the people of the other side to take part in operations of war directed against their country.

Now:

1. DURING THE INVASION, Belgian civilians, in numberless places, were forced to take part in war operations against their own country, at Termonde, at Lebbeke, at Dinant, and elsewhere; in many places PEACEABLE CITIZENS, WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE FORCED TO MARCH AT THE HEAD OF GERMAN REGIMENTS or to form a curtain in front of them.

At Liège and at Namur, civilians were forced to dig trenches and were employed to repair fortifications. The régime of hostages reigned frantically. The proclamation of the 4th of August cited above said it plainly: "HOSTAGES WILL BE TAKEN IN GREAT NUMBERS."

An official proclamation posted up in Liège in the first days of August, read:

"All aggressions committed against the German troops by others than soldiers in uniform, expose not only him who renders himself guilty to be immediately executed, but will also cause the most violent reprisals against all the inhabitants, and especially against the people of Liège who are held as HOSTAGES in the citadel of Liège by the Commander of the German troops."

These hostages are Mgr. Rutten, Bishop of Liège; Mr. Klever, Burgomaster of Liège; the senators, representatives, permanent deputies, aldermen of Liège.

2. UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF FIELD MARSHALL VON DER GOLTZ, the requisitions of service practised during the month of August, were continued under all forms: digging of trenches, work on the fortifications, carting, work on the roads, on the bridges, on the railroads, etc.

A decree of the Governor-General appeared the 19th of November, saying: "Will be punished with imprisonment—of which the decree does not even give the duration: it is arbitrary without reserve—no matter who will attempt to prevent by force, by threats, by persuasion, or by other means, the execution of a work destined to the German authorities, persons disposed to furnish this work or contractors charged by the German authorities with the execution of this work."

As regards THE REGIME OF HOSTAGES, it was carried out in all its rigor.

A monstrous specimen of arbitrary cruelty is the proclamation placarded in the communes of Beyne-Heusay, Grivegnée, Bois de Breux, by Major Dieckmann, September 8th, 1914. Here is an extract:

"From the 7th of September, I will permit the people of the aforesaid communes to go into their homes. To assure against abuse of this permission, the burgomasters of Beyne-Heusay and of Grivegnée must make lists immediately of people who will be held as 'hostages' in the fort of Fléron.

"The lives of these hostages depend upon the peaceable behavior of the inhabitants of these communes."

I will designate the people who are to be held from noon one day to noon the next as hostages. If the substitution is not made in time, the

hostage will have to remain for another 24 hours in the fort. After the expiration of these extra 24 hours, "the hostage is subject to the death penalty if the substitution is not made." As hostages, the priests and the burgomasters and the other members of the administration are placed in the first line.

3. UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE BARON VON BISSING, the violations of Article 52 were flagrant. Things that took place in the railroad shops at Luttre and at Mechlin, as well as in many towns of West Flanders, are revolting. Let us judge for ourselves:

At the Arsenal of Luttre the German official had posted up on March 23, 1915, a notice ordering the taking up again of work. The 21st of April they demanded 200 workmen. The 27th of April soldiers went to summon workmen at their homes and conducted them to the arsenal. In case the workman was absent, a member of the family was arrested. Meanwhile the workmen remained firm in their refusal to work, "because they did not want to co-operate in acts of war against their country."

The 30th of April the workmen summoned were no longer released, but locked up in railroad trains.

The 4th of May 24 workmen imprisoned at Nivelles, were judged at Mons by a counsel of war, "under the accusation of being a member of a secret society the aim of which was to thwart the carrying out of German military measures." They are condemned to imprisonment.

The 8th of May, 1915, 49 workmen are locked up in a freight car and sent to Germany.

May 14th, 45 workmen are deported to Germany.

May 18th a new proclamation announces that the prisoners will receive only dry bread and water; hot food only every four days. May 22nd "three cars carrying 104 workmen are sent towards Charleroi."

Notwithstanding everything the patriotic dignity of the workmen finally triumphed over the pressure exercised over them.

It was the same at MECHLIN, where by diverse means of intimidation the German authorities tried to compel the workmen at the railroad shops to work on material for the railroad, just as if it were not evident that this material would sooner or later become war material.

May 30, 1915, the Governor-General published "that he would be obliged to punish the city of Mechlin and its environs in stopping all business traffic if on Wednesday, June 2nd, at 10 o'clock in the morning, 500 workmen of the arsenal did not present themselves for work."

On Wednesday, June 2nd, not one workman presented himself for work. Hence a decree forbidding any vehicles to pass within a radius of many kilometres around the city.

It was at this time that the Cardinal of Mechlin made his trip on foot from Mechlin to Eppeghem; a trip which caused the city of Mechlin to pay a fine of 20,000 marks.

Many workmen were taken by force and held during two or three days at the shops.

The suspension of traffic lasted ten days.

The Commune of SWEVEGHEM (West Flanders) was punished in June, 1915, because the 350 workmen of the factory—private factory

of Mr. Bekaert—refused to manufacture barbed wire for the German army.

Here is a bill which was posted up in July-August, 1915, at MENIN; Order: Dating from to-day the city can no longer give help—no matter of what kind, even to families, women and children—except only to those workmen who work “regularly” on “military jobs” and other prescribed work. All other workmen and their families can no longer be helped in any way.

Is this not too odious?

Similar measures were taken in October, 1915, at Harlebeke-Coutrai, at Bisseghem, at Lokeren, at Mons. At Harlebeke 29 inhabitants were deported to Germany. At Mons, at the factory of Mr. Lenoir, the directors, foremen, and 81 workmen were condemned to imprisonment for refusing to work for the German army: Mr. Lenoir got 5 years' imprisonment, 5 directors got one year, six foremen got 6 months; 81 workmen 8 weeks.

The General Government had recourse also to “indirect” means of coercion. It took possession of the Red Cross of Belgium, confiscated their funds, and arbitrarily changed its purpose. It tried to get possession of the public charity organization and to exercise its control on the National Committee of Help and Food. If we cited in extenso the decree of the Governor-General of May 14th, 1915, “concerning the measures destined to assure the execution of works of public interest,” and that of August 15, 1915, “concerning the strikers who through laziness avoid work,” we would see by what detours the occupying power tried to reach at the same time the employers and the workmen.

But it is in the zone of the “etapes” that disregard for the Convention of the Hague was pushed to the extreme.

The 12th of Oct., 1915, the Official Bulletin of decrees for the region of the “Etapes,” published a decree, of which below are the salient passages:

Art. 1. He who without motive refuses to undertake or to continue a work corresponding to his profession and in the execution of which “the military administration is interested,” work ordained by one or several military commanders, will be punished by reformatory imprisonment for one year at the most. He may also be deported to Germany.

“The fact that Belgian laws to the contrary or even international conventions are invoked can in no case justify a refusal to work.”

Regarding the legitimacy of the work exacted, the “Military Commander alone has the right to take a decision.”

Art. 2. Is liable to imprisonment of 5 years at the most, he who by coercion, menace, persuasion or other means, tries to influence another person to the refusal designated in Art. 1.

Art. 3. He who knowingly by “help or other means” favors the punishable refusal to work, will be liable to a fine up to 10,000 mks., he may also be condemned to one year's imprisonment.

If communes or associations render themselves culpable of such a transgression, the authorities will be punished in consequence.

Art. 4. Independently of the penalties which Articles 1 and 3 threaten, the German authorities can in case of need impose on the com-

munes, where without motive the execution of a work has been refused, a contribution or other coercive police measures.

The present decree goes at once into force.

Ghent, the 12th of October, 1915.

The Etappeinspecteur.

Von Uuger, general leutnant.

The arbitrary injustice of this decree surpasses all that one could imagine. Forced labor, collective penalties, indeterminate sanctions: everything is there. It is slavery, neither more nor less.

III. NEW TAXES.

Let us confine ourselves to point out in a few words two taxes contrary to articles 48, 49, 51 and 52 of the Convention of the Hague.

THE FIRST was decreed by an order of Governor-General Baron von Bissing, on Jan. 16th, 1915. It consists in taxing the absent people with an additional and extraordinary tax fixed at ten times the total of their personal taxes. This tax is contained in none of the categories of existing taxes, it only affects one class of citizens who lawfully made use of their right to move their residence previously to the occupation of the country. It is consequently contrary to articles 48 and 51 of the Convention.

The SECOND violation of the Convention is the famous Contribution of 480 millions imposed on the nine provinces the 10th of December, 1914.

The essential condition of the legitimacy of a tax of this kind, according to the Convention of the Hague, is that it be IN KEEPING WITH THE RESOURCES OF THE COUNTRY. Art. 52.

Now, in December, 1914, Belgium was devastated; war contributions imposed on the cities, innumerable requisitions in kind, had exhausted it; the greater part of the factories were stopped, and from those who still worked they did not hesitate to demand, contrary to all law, the raw materials.

It is on this impoverished Belgium, living on foreign charity, that a tax of about a half million was imposed.

The decree of Dec. 10th, 1914, read: A war contribution of 40 million francs, to be paid monthly during the period of one year, is imposed on the Belgian population.

This "period of one year has now elapsed"!

Now, at this writing, the occupying power pretends to replace "the period of one year" by "the entire duration of the war."

Poor little Belgium! What has she done to the rich and powerful Germany, her neighbor, to be thus trodden down, tortured, calumniated, bled, oppressed by her?

If we had to furnish a complete statement of the decrees and acts by which the Occupying Power to our knowledge has gone contrary to the Convention of the Hague, we would have still to cite "the abuse of requisitions in kind," contrary to Article 52; "the seizure" of funds belonging to private societies, the requisition of railroad rails for a distance of hundreds of kilometres; the seizure of arms placed by the order of

the Belgian Government in communal houses, an abuse contrary to "Article 53"; THE REFUSAL to recognize, especially in matters of penal law LAWS IN FORCE IN THE COUNTRY, contrary to "Article 43."

But we cannot tell everything here, nor cite everything.

If, however, the persons to whom our correspondence is destined wish proof of the accusations which are only indicated in this final paragraph, we will furnish it immediately. There is no allegation either in our Letter or in these four annexes of which we do not possess the proof in our files.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 933 739 3